



# Yellowstone River *Conservation District* Council

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## Meeting Minutes -- August 21, 2008 Haugo Center Meeting Room; Forsyth, Montana

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD and MACD; Kenny Nemitz, Dawson CD; Dave Schwarz, Prairie CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD; John Moorhouse, RAC Chairman and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND, CD.

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, TAC; Burt Williams, TAC/TNC; George Jordan, USFWS; Mack Cole, RAC; Art Gehnert, RAC; Nicole McClain, YRCDC Coordinator; Laverne Ivie, Yellowstone CD; Tina Bonnell and Judy Knapp, Treasure CD; Joe Whalen, Miles City Mayor; Gay Easton, YCD, Kelly Norwood, Project Assistant and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

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Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:00 am on Thursday, August 21, 2008. Introductions were made.

TAC update: Warren Kellogg reported that the meeting held the previous day with the CD administrators concerning the 310 Google data base was successful. Only two counties have not been contacted.

### Fisheries:

Warren yielded the floor to George Jordan, USFWS. He provided some background information on the Fisheries Scope of Work (SOW) and other work being conducted by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP). He explained that available data used to map the fisheries habitats on the Yellowstone would support the Fisheries SOW. In general, fisheries habitats were mapped on the 2005 color infrared photos which were taken during relatively low water flows. As part of the fisheries SOW there is a need to look at habitat changes through time and this conceptually relies on mapping habitats on aerial photography taken at higher flow levels. As part of the Fisheries mapping efforts, approved by the YRCDC in December or so and funded under work order 5, the GIS folks at DTM began to replicate habitat mapping techniques used by MFWP. Concerns were raised about the compatibility of mapping at different flow regimes. In order to assess compatibility of mapping at low and bank full flows, a pilot study was done comparing both the number of individual habitat types in a reach and the areas of habitat types in a reach. Bob Bramblett of Montana State University and Matt Jaeger, MFWP, are reviewing the results to make sure the statistics will be correct. He anticipates getting their feedback prior to the next TAC meeting so the TAC can discuss the results and make a recommendation on proceeding with this method.

Warren added that the habitat mapping overtime was not in the original scope of work, but is critical to the full fisheries scope of work.

Avian: Warren reported that the avian study with Danielle Jones is nearly completed with the final report being due the end of September. Danielle will be on the agenda for the September TAC meeting.

Wetlands: The Montana Land Information Act grant funds and money from the ACOE fund the wetlands mapping. Once contracts are written Montana Heritage can begin this work. Nicole commented that the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture has put up money for this project and they issued a challenge to other agencies, \$10,000.00 was pledged from BLM.

Pryor Creek: Flow monitoring has started on Pryor Creek. There will be a meeting and field trip to Pryor Creek on Friday August 29, 2008 at 8:30 am. Alex Apotsos, Senior Science Fellow for Senator John Tester's Washington D.C. office and Rachel Court, Billings Field Director for Senator John Tester will attend in addition to Warren, Bob Hector, Don Youngbauer and Nicole McClain.

Channel Migration Maps: Maps for the entire corridor are now posted on the YRCDC web site. Warren hopes to conduct fall and winter CMZ workshops for Conservation Districts within the corridor. He explained the importance of getting community leaders together to determine how the maps can best be used. There is funding available in the

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RDGP grant to accomplish this goal, but the grant expires December 31, so the workshops need to take place before year-end. Warren will talk to Karin Boyd about her interest and availability and will report back at the September meeting. Bob Hector made a motion to approve the proposed budget and associated program to conduct local CMZ workshops, John Moorhouse seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion carried by voice vote.

Economic Scope of work: Burt Williams said that Headwaters Economics of Bozeman would be a likely choice for this study. He proposed having them do a pilot in order to see if it would fit our needs. They will use the data they have to document the socio-economic conditions and trends of the towns and cities along the Yellowstone River. They will also document historical land use change including how much new residential is coming in, and how much commercial and industrial. They will look at housing forecasts to see how much housing is likely to be built along the river. Warren said a firm proposal could be brought to the Council in September. The Council directed Burt and Warren to proceed.

Cumulative Effects Analysis: Warren suggested that the TAC incorporate the status of the cumulative effects and analysis into their report to the Council at each meeting. Burt Williams summarized the TAC discussions on cumulative effects analysis, stating that cumulative effects analysis amounts to a management plan. They started by reviewing other cumulative effects work, most of which has been done to satisfy requirements in the National Environmental Policy Act. While there is a lot of material, including mathematical models, to draw upon, the TAC has found it is difficult to develop an approach model from patterns others have used. The TAC decided its approach is to come up with their own design. They think there are 3 major issues they need to know about at the physical level; water quantity, water quality, and the geology of the valley itself. After these three primary issues, they are looking at biology of the river and its immediate bank channel and the riparian areas on the immediate river banks will also be involved. Socio-economics are involved because decisions made by people affect the river and the results of those decisions in some instances reflect back on the economics of river communities. It has taken the TAC a full day of discussion just to define those five major areas of study (water quantity, water quality, geological context, river channel biology and riparian area biology). Before the next TAC meeting, the TAC members have been tasked to report on what the human influences are on all the components of the previous subjects.

Cumulative effects are where science meets politics, so the TAC would welcome as much Council input into their meetings on this subject as possible. Also in the very near future, the TAC should meet jointly with the RAC to ensure that stake-holder views are fully factored into the cumulative effects analysis.

Warren invited any RAC or Council members to the September 10, 2008 TAC meeting in Livingston.

Mayor Joe Whalen of Miles City addressed the Council in regard to the flood planning in Miles City. He described the stages the City is going through. The crisis is that Miles City is being called to account by FEMA for its neglect over the past several decades to address the issue that Miles City sits in the center of a floodplain. FEMA has contacted the Corps of Engineers to modernize the map and a revision has been proposed. The flooding that Miles City is at risk for is caused by ice jams and the COE has come up with a new digital flood insurance rate map to propose to FEMA. This is currently being revised by FEMA. It will be presented on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Legislation by Senator Baucus will be presented to the 2009 Legislature to provide Miles City with some funding sources for a general investigation study. The Montana legislature will also be contacted. The Mayor thanked Don Youngbauer for his supportive comments and comprehensive view of the river system.

Business meeting: Carol Watts handed out the financial reports. The first one was a printout of the transactions in the account since the last meeting. The second was the grant statement which shows the balances in the grants. Carol discussed how each grant was being used. There were no questions and the reports were accepted for audit. John Moorhouse made a motion to accept the financial reports, Paul Gilbert seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

The minutes for the June 19, 2008 meeting were approved. Tony Barone made the motion to accept the minutes, Orvin Finsaas seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.



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RAC update: John Moorhouse had met with Nicole, Mike Penfold and John Pulasky to discuss doing a pilot meeting in Yellowstone County concerning Russian olive and salt cedar. Costs for doing these meetings could be prohibitive. John asked Nicole to speak about the scope of work.

Nicole McClain explained that the scope of work for education and outreach was developed so that it would eventually go into the project management plan. Each Council member received the scope of work in their packets. The first task is education and outreach about non-native phreatophytes in the Yellowstone riparian area. This would be Russian olive and salt cedar.

A pilot program would be doing public service announcements about meetings, the rail tour and other items and later compiling those into a video as part of the project management plan. Funding is possible through RDGP.

John Moorhouse commented that it would be a good idea to recruit someone for the RAC who would be proficient in video/ press releases, etc. Mack Cole suggested that local newspapers could be used. Task two is the channel migration zone mapping. A pilot meeting will be held with selected audiences where the CMZ maps could be shown.

The third task is outreach and education workshops to provide information to key target groups to raise awareness of the work of the Council. The plan is to conduct twelve basin wide hands-on workshops per year, over five years. Cost is projected to be \$17,000.00 annually.

Vice-Chairman's report: Bob Hector said that at the last meeting the Council members were asked to find out what their local districts would be willing to do in regard to river clean up projects. There has been no feedback and it was decided by the Council that this should be a project for service clubs in the area. Nicole suggested that a day could be picked where each CD would do some clean up with a partner or provide some help.

Update: Paul Gilbert reported on the Inter Agency meeting saying that it was great to get the agencies together. Jim Robinson served as facilitator and the CMZ mapping was displayed.

Paul explained the concept for Dornix Park planned for Big Timber which was on display in the meeting room. He said we would be able to view the area while on the rail tour. John Moorhouse made a motion to support the concept of the park, Bob Hector seconded and the motion carried by voice vote. After viewing the area a more formal support statement will be written.

MRRIC update: Dave Schwarz reported that two positions were open for the MRRIC, (Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee) as a Committee member and as an alternate.

Dave agreed to serve and his application will be completed. It is hoped to secure funding through a 223 grant for travel expenses to attend these meetings. There is money at stake and it is important that a Council member be appointed to the Committee.

Coordinator's report: A coordinators report was available in the packet for the Council members. Nicole updated the members with her travel report and stated that she was still trying to make it to meetings in southeastern Montana but had not been able to fit them into her schedule. Nicole has planned her vacation for 9/17 through 9/23. She is currently working on the FY2008 report and will supply a draft copy at the September meeting.

The RDGP grant application has been reviewed by DNRC but it is not known if it made the final cut. Nicole did apply for a PPL grant for a computer system that would allow us to provide access for the public to view the GIS files. The amount of the grant is \$20,000. There would be funding for training also.

The rail tour guest list and bios were given to the Council members. Nicole needs to know right away if supervisors will be attending. Nicole listed the sites we will see and said she hoped to be able to video the tour. Laurie Zeller is working on a program which will have mile markers so you can identify where you are tour. There will also be a PA system on the train.

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The budget committee had met earlier in the day and approved the FY2009 budget. Nicole explained the budget and it was discussed by the Council. Kelly will go to quarter time beginning October 1, 2008. There will be a 3% cost of living raise and there is a line item for accrued leave to protect Custer County Conservation District. Travel expenses will increase because we will no longer be able to use the RDGP grant for RAC/TAC travel. Another expense is the meeting room. Laverne Ivie suggested the Yellowstone Valley Electric in Huntley, MT. Nicole will research that. John Moorhouse made a motion to accept the budget with the date change for Kelly, Bob Hector seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Nicole visited with Julie Dial, Director of the Western Heritage Center. The center will be doing the archival for the cultural inventory that Susan Gilbertz produced. Julie said that the Center was contributing \$10,000 in cost share and anyone releasing their interviews would receive a lifetime membership to the Center.

Our standing rules state that travel must be pre-approved and Nicole designed a travel request form and encourages anyone wanting to attend a meeting outside of a regular Council meeting to submit the request.

Nicole questioned whether or not we were ready for a Roundtable discussion. She was concerned that we were not far enough into the cumulative effects study to warrant the round table. The Council expressed concern that the roundtable was part of the legislative requirement and urged Nicole to continue with the planning. Burt Williams said it was important to have the roundtable before December in order to have a strategy for the Corps in their budget process. A committee of Dave Schwarz, Laverne Ivie, Burt Williams, and Paul Gilbert will meet with Nicole to determine if a roundtable discussion is feasible.

Chairman's Report: Don Youngbauer spoke about the draft position paper concerning Senator Jon Tester's watershed bill. He said the bill may be needed for funding but it appeared that conservation districts would be by passed and it was important to use the people who were already in place. Tony Barone made a motion to adopt the position paper with a change made to "any member will have equal representation." Paul Gilbert seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Warren commented that watersheds were not just about water and he didn't think that the Bureaus of Reclamation was the correct agency to be used for funding.

Don said he was invited to attend the National Association of State Conservation Agencies convention in Whitefish September 7-10. He would like to represent the YRCDC at that meeting.

Fieldtrip: After the meeting adjourned the group drove to the Cartersville Dam where Don Youngbauer and Warren Kellogg explained the concerns with the dam.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm. The next meeting will be September 12, 2008 in Livingston, MT.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator



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## Yellowstone River Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

DRAFT Meeting Notes – 7/30-31/2008  
Chico Hot Springs, MT

Thanks to Nicole McClain for setting up the TAC meeting in Chico and to Paul Gilbert for attending and participating in the TAC meeting.

### Cumulative Effects Analysis

Cumulative Effects Analysis: Burt Williams continued facilitating our on-going discussion on cumulative effects assessment. The first day of the TAC meeting was dedicated to this discussion. The following are notes taken during that work session:

#### Summary:

The TAC has had several discussions trying to grapple with the nature of cumulative effects. We have considered contracting with a facilitator to do a workshop and training to help us define the issue. We have also discussed several ways to look at the subject based on other investigators' and agencies' previous handling of similar issues. But, to paraphrase a conversation with Karin Boyd, it seems that we have had to think through the problem on our own, and then jointly come to a definition and the beginnings of an approach to understanding cumulative effects. The outside solutions were either too mechanistic or not pertinent enough to our understanding of the Yellowstone River valley for us to embrace them or be comfortable with them without working through the problem ourselves.

At this meeting (July 30) we made considerable progress, arriving at a working definition of cumulative effects and outlining what we think are the critical areas of understanding needed to identify how anthropogenic change may have interacted with the river valley and changed parts of the system.

#### Working definition:

Cumulative effects refer to the accrued changes to the aquatic-riparian system that correlate with human activities in or near the Yellowstone River. These effects can be assessed by measuring and projecting changes in water quantity, water quality, geologic context, aquatic system integrity, and riparian system integrity (critical assessments). Taken as a set, these critical assessments allow decision makers to avoid degradation of the system and identify opportunities for improving or restoring system characteristics or functions. Understanding and monitoring of cumulative effects can thus help decision makers develop Best Management Practices that are sensitive to historic conditions, current conditions and projected impacts to the system. In sum, cumulative effects analyses are essential to ensuring the long term sustainability of the river.

<i>Five Critical Assessments</i>
Water Quantity Water Quality Geological Context Aquatic System Integrity Riparian System Integrity

**Breakdown of Critical Assessments:** It is helpful to the understanding of the critical assessment topics to think of them hierarchically. At the base the river system is dependent on physical attributes. Our discussion concluded that three attributes are most important to our understanding of change to the system—water quantity, water quality, and geological context.





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Overlying the physical attributes are the ecosystems that are dependent on the water and geological attributes, in this case the river channel and the aquatic ecosystem it produces and maintains, and the floodplain and the riparian ecosystem that are dependent on the presence of the river. The TAC discussed whether the wetlands along the Yellowstone should be identified as a separate system or a component of another ecosystem. The consensus of the discussion was that it could be classified as a component of the riparian zone.

Although not discussed in detail yet, the discussion also concluded that the socioeconomic assessment belonged on a different dimension than the five critical assessment areas. It both acts on the river system to produce or cause change to the system, but also is affected by how well the river system operates. Thus the TAC concluded that it would develop the five critical assessment areas in some detail so that we could go to the socioeconomic topic and begin to detail what human or community actions change or influence the system, determine how much change shows up historically, and what trends can be predicted for the future state of that critical assessment area.

Further the TAC wants to take each Critical Assessment separately and take it through the identification of constituent subcomponents and for each critical assessment area identify what human actions could affect it. We realize that there will be interplay between the various Critical Assessments, but want to get clarity on each one before looking at the complications or amplifications of human influences.

## Reach Maps/Narrative

- Karin Boyd handed out draft Reach summaries for Reaches C16 and C17. TAC members were asked to review these drafts and be prepared to discuss them at future TAC meetings.

## Hydrology, Hydraulics, and Geomorphology

### Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) Maps

The CMZ maps and report have been completed by Applied Geomorphology, Inc. and DTM. Copies were distributed to Council members at their last meeting. The CMZ maps and report have been posted on the YRCDC Home Page (DNRC CARDD) and the Yellowstone River Corridor Resource Page (NRIS). The TAC would like to work with the RAC in developing county outreach sessions to deliver and discuss the CMZ maps with local CD supervisors, county officials, and landowners.

### Human Impacts Timeline

The contract (42K) with DTM is nearly complete for the three counties (Stillwater, Yellowstone, and Dawson). The mapping and analysis are complete and will soon be available. Based upon the value of the information contained in the pending report, the TAC may recommend to the Council to expand this effort into additional counties with available 2005 RDG funds (up to 17K).

## Socioeconomic

### Economics

- Burt Williams and Warren Kellogg have recently had discussion with Headwaters Economics (nonprofit research group in Bozeman). They were encouraged to submit a draft proposal for a pilot study to document current and future pressures on the Yellowstone River resulting from human activities. This proposal was recently submitted to the TAC. The TAC members were asked to review the proposal and send any comments/suggestions to Burt Williams by August 8<sup>th</sup>. Greg Johnson was going to check to see if such a group would be eligible for ACOE funding as a sole source. We will take this to the Council at their August meeting.

## Biology

### Wetlands

- MLIA grant (Montana Dept of Administration) was approved for \$74,250 to complete wetland mapping on 54 USGS 1:24,000 quads along the Yellowstone River corridor. The DOA is currently working on a Statement of

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Work. Nicole will be working on a contract between the DOA and Custer CD, and between the Montana Natural Heritage Program. She will also be completing agreements/contracts with the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, MT FW&P, and MT DEQ for an additional \$5,000.

- ACOE and the TAC will recommend to the Council to use \$43,750 of the ACOE's remaining FY08 monies to have the remaining 35 quads mapped. This would fully fund Task 1 of the Wetland SOW to complete current-day wetland mapping for the entire Yellowstone River corridor.

## Avian

- Danielle Jones has nearly completed the avian study. She is scheduled to give a presentation to the TAC at their September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. The final report should be completed by the end of September. There were several questions posed by the TAC that will be forwarded to Danielle prior to her presentation in September.
- There has also been a request by Steve Hoffman, Montana Audubon, to give a ½ hour presentation at the TAC's September meeting on their "Important Bird Area Species List".

## Fisheries

- Tony Thatcher (DTM) gave a progress report on the fisheries habitat mapping (Work Order #5).
- George Jordan and his fisheries committee acknowledged that DTM has done a great job completing the habitat delineations/mapping of the 15 pilot reaches and subsequent enumeration of habitat types. There was discussion about the appropriateness of habitat counts as the variable. The fisheries researchers agreed that habitat area is likely more valid. The overall recommendation is to expand the current efforts by DTM by having them develop surface area polygons of habitat types in the 15 reaches already analyzed such that additional statistical comparisons can be made. This would be accomplished by using the funds remaining (approximately \$7,400) in Work Order 5 and would fully execute this work order.

## Riparian

- Tony Thatcher (DTM) reported on the status of the riparian trend mapping. The draft report will be out for review by late August.

## Information and Public Outreach

### Information Management Scope of Work

- To make the YRCDC information more accessible to the public, it will be suggested that the Council look into acquiring a Yellowstone domain web page with links to the data and information generated from the cumulative effects study.
- Discussion on format. PDF/Atlas format with different data layers that be brought in. Would the Google Earth web format work? This will be an on-going topic of discussion in future TAC meetings.

## Rail Tour

- Nicole reported that the rail tour is scheduled for September 11<sup>th</sup> encompassing a round trip between Livingston and Columbus. There will be a reception that evening following the tour. The YRCDC will meet the following day on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The TAC plans to meet on September 10<sup>th</sup> in Livingston the day before the tour.
- Five sites were selected to highlight during the tour that Karin, Jim, and Warren will provide information and photos to include in the tour brochure.

Public Participation: Nicole reported that the RAC has been working on a draft Public Participation Scope of Work (SOW) that would eventually be a replacement to the current placeholder in the Project Management Plan. Nicole reported that the RAC may present the draft SOW to the Council at their August meeting. The TAC will assist the RAC, as they see fit, in fleshing out any of the tasks outlined in the SOW. Steve Schmitz suggested adding another task that would include a video describing the Council's role and function. He will articulate his idea before the August Council meeting.

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## 310 Web Application

Three CDs have been trained and are currently entering 310 records into the 310 Google Earth database. A meeting with the Yellowstone CD Administrators is planned for later in August to show them the web application and begin assisting interested CDs in getting started. We eventually would like to take it to the next level by putting on workshops to show how this web application can help CDs make 310 permitting decisions.

## Miscellaneous

### ACOE Budget

- Greg Johnson reported that the current status of FFY 2009 funding for the Yellowstone River cumulative effects study is still in committee. The Senate has it at 500K and the House at 200K.

### CWMA

- Nicole reported on the YRCDC's position on the Cooperative Watershed Management Act of 2008 that Senator Tester is sponsoring. Nicole has met with and sent comments to Tester's staff.

### TAC Meeting

The TAC will be meeting on September 10th in Livingston (8:30am to 4pm), the day before the YRCDC's rail tour. The specific TAC meeting location will be at the Yellowstone Montana Inn arranged by Nicole. Agenda items will include:

- Cumulative Effects Analysis
- Rail Tour Preparation
- Avian Study Report – Danielle Jones
- Audubon Presentation
- Information Management SOW
- Riparian Trend Mapping